

What is Claimed is:

1. A method of sharing consumer information between consumers via a communications network that comprises a data store accessible by a plurality of terminals each associated with a respective consumer, the method comprising:

a providing consumer entering information about a product, service or supplier into their terminal and uploading that information to the data store;

classifying the entered information into channels, each channel relating to a particular consumer issue about the product, service or supplier;

storing the classified information; and

storing a profile of a requesting consumer that identifies the channels corresponding to consumer issues of interest to the requesting consumer;

wherein (i) the requesting consumer enters a request for information about the product, service or supplier into their terminal, (ii) and in response to the request, information is downloaded to the requesting consumer if that information relates to the product, service or supplier and was classified into any of the channels defined by the requesting consumer's profile.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the requesting consumer's profile is stored on the network and is retrieved from storage in response to the request for information.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising providing to the requesting consumer a list of channels defined by the requesting consumer's profile that contain information on the product, service or supplier specified by the requesting user.

4. The method of Claim 3, wherein the requesting user chooses among the available channels before displaying the information on their terminal.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the providing consumer or their terminal classifies the entered information into channels.

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein the providing consumer specifies the channel(s) into which information is to be input, and inputs information into the or each specified channel.

7. A method of sharing consumer information between consumers via a communications network that comprises a data store accessible by a plurality of terminals each associated with a respective consumer, the method comprising:

a requesting consumer entering into their terminal a request for information about a product, service or supplier and uploading that request to the network;

identifying the requesting consumer and recalling a stored profile that identifies channels corresponding to consumer issues of interest to the requesting consumer;

retrieving from the data store classified information about the product, service or supplier uploaded by a providing consumer to the data store; and

downloading the classified information to the requesting consumer if that information relates to the product, service or supplier and was classified into any of the channels defined by a stored profile that identifies channels corresponding to consumer issues of interest to the requesting consumer.

8. A method of sharing consumer information between consumers via a communications network that comprises a data store accessible by a plurality of terminals each associated with a respective consumer, the method comprising:

a providing consumer entering information about a product, service or supplier into their terminal for uploading to the data store and classifying the information into channels in accordance with consumer issues of potential interest to a requesting consumer.

9. The method of Claim 8, wherein the providing user is presented with a selection of available channels in accordance with the identity of the product, service or supplier to which the information relates.

10. A method of sharing consumer information between consumers via a communications network that comprises a data store accessible by a plurality of terminals each associated with a respective consumer, such that a providing consumer can enter information about a product, service or supplier into a first terminal and upload that information to the data store, and a requesting consumer can enter a request for information about the product, service or supplier and download that information from the data store, wherein the method comprising:

storing the uploaded information classified into channels, each channel relating to a particular consumer issue about the product, service or supplier;

in response to a request for information, identifying the requesting consumer and recalling a profile that identifies the channels corresponding to consumer issues of interest to the requesting consumer; and

downloading the classified information to the requesting consumer if that information relates to the product, service or supplier and was classified into any of the channels defined by the profile.

11. The method of Claim 10, further comprising entering a unique alphanumeric identifier associated with the product, service or supplier into the providing consumer's terminal or the requesting consumer's terminal to identify the product, service or supplier the subject of the providing consumer's information or the requesting consumer's request.

12. The method of Claim 10, further comprising scanning a uniquely coded identifier associated with the product, service or supplier to identify the product, service or supplier the subject of the providing consumer's information or the requesting consumer's request.

13. The method of Claim 10, wherein the requesting consumer bookmarks the product, service or supplier, and wherein information on the bookmarked product, service or supplier is subsequently downloaded to the requesting consumer.

14. The method of Claim 10, wherein information is downloaded to a different terminal to that into which the requesting user entered the request for information.

15. A system for sharing consumer information between consumers, the system comprising:

a communications network accessible by first and second terminals each associated with a respective consumer, such that a providing consumer can enter information about a product, service or supplier into a first terminal and upload that information to the network;

means for classifying the entered information into channels, each channel relating to a particular consumer issue about the product, service or supplier;

a data store being part of the network for storing the classified information;

a second terminal for the requesting consumer to enter a request for information about the product, service or supplier;

means responsive to the request to recognize the requesting consumer and to recall a profile that identifies the channels corresponding to consumer issues of interest to the requesting consumer; and

a filter responsive to the requesting consumer's profile, the filter being set to permit download of information to the requesting consumer if that information relates to the product, service or supplier and was classified into any of the channels defined by the requesting consumer's profile.

16. A system for sharing consumer information between consumers, the system comprising:

a terminal usable by a requesting consumer to request information about a product, service or supplier, to upload that request to a communications network and to download the requested information from the communications network;

means responsive to the request to recognize the requesting consumer and to retrieve from a data store classified information about the product, service or supplier uploaded by a providing consumer to the data store; and

a filter responsive to a stored profile that identifies channels corresponding to consumer issues of interest to the requesting consumer, the filter being set to permit download of information to the requesting consumer if that information relates to the product, service or supplier and was classified into any of the channels defined by the requesting consumer's profile.

17. A system for sharing consumer information between consumers, the system comprising:

a terminal usable by a providing consumer to enter information about a product, service or supplier for uploading to a communications network; and

means for classifying the information into channels in accordance with consumer issues of potential interest to a requesting consumer.

18. The system of Claim 17, further comprising means responsive to the identity of the product, service or supplier to present the providing user with a selection of available channels in accordance with the product, service or supplier to which the information relates.

19. A communications system for sharing consumer information between consumers, the system being accessible by first and second terminals each associated with a respective consumer, such that a providing consumer can enter information about a product, service or supplier into a first terminal and upload that information to the system, and a

requesting consumer can enter a request for information about said product, service or supplier and download that information from the system, the system comprising:

a data store for storing the uploaded information classified into channels, each channel relating to a particular consumer issue about the product, service or supplier;

means responsive to a request for information to recognize the requesting consumer and to recall a profile that identifies the channels corresponding to consumer issues of interest to the requesting consumer; and

a filter responsive to the requesting consumer's profile, the filter being set to permit download of information to the requesting consumer if that information relates to the product, service or supplier and was classified into any of the channels defined by the requesting consumer's profile.

20. The system of Claim 19, further comprising means for storing the requesting consumer's profile and retrieving the requesting consumer's profile from storage in response to the request for information.

21. The system of Claim 19, comprising means for entering a unique alphanumeric identifier associated with the product, service or supplier into the providing consumer's terminal or the requesting consumer's terminal to identify the product, service or supplier the subject of the providing consumer's information or the requesting consumer's request.

22. The system of Claim 19, further comprising scanner means for scanning a uniquely coded identifier associated with the product, service or supplier to identify the product, service or supplier the subject of the providing consumer's information or the requesting consumer's request.

23. The system of Claim 22, wherein the uniquely coded identifier comprises a barcode or a RF tag.

24. A terminal programmed to enable a providing consumer and a requesting consumer to share consumer information, the terminal comprising:

means for enabling the providing consumer to enter information about a product, service or supplier for uploading to a communications network; and

means for classifying the information into channels in accordance with consumer issues of potential interest to the requesting consumer.